

Bobby Fischer, Grand Master of Revisionism

The World Champion Could Always Figure out His Opponent's Game

[John Wear](#)



Chess Prodigy

Robert James “Bobby” Fischer began playing chess at Age Six when his mother Regina bought him a chess set at a candy store. Fischer and his older sister Joan learned the rules from the enclosed manual. Bobby and his sister began playing with each other, but Joan soon wasn’t a match for Bobby. [\[i\]](#)

Fischer’s potential was discovered by Carmine Nigro, the newly elected president of the Brooklyn Chess Club. Although seven-year-old Bobby lost his first exhibition game with a local chess master, Nigro was impressed with the sensible moves Bobby made in the game. Nigro approached Regina and Bobby after the game and invited Bobby to join the Brooklyn Chess Club. Bobby became a regular member of the club, and Nigro, an expert player of near-master strength, became Bobby’s first tutor and mentor. [\[ii\]](#)

Bobby was a dedicated chess student with an insatiable desire to read chess literature. One chess master said of him: “Bobby virtually inhaled chess literature. He remembered everything and it became a part of him.” [\[iii\]](#)

Bobby at Age 12 became the youngest member in the history of the Manhattan Chess Club. The Manhattan Chess Club was the strongest chess club in the country, and afforded Bobby the opportunity to play chess 12 hours a day, seven days a week. Bobby would play as many as 100 speed games a day. With additional tutoring from Jack Collins, one of the great teachers of chess, Fischer at Age 13 became the youngest American ever to achieve the ranking of chess master. [\[iv\]](#)

Fischer became the United States Chess Champion at Age 14 [\[v\]](#), eventually winning the U.S. title a total of eight times. In December 1963, Fischer won every game in the U.S. Chess Championship against 11 of the highest-ranked players in the country. It was an awesome performance; Fischer had proven himself to be in a different league. Everyone realized that Fischer posed a threat to Soviet supremacy in chess, and the world buzzed in anticipation of his future performances. [\[vi\]](#)

World Champion

American Chess Grandmaster Pal Benkö generously gave Fischer the opportunity to play for the 1972 World Chess Championship. Benkö explains:

It was like this: Fischer did not play in the American championship because of some quarrel. That automatically meant that he could not play in the interzonal tournament in Palma de Mallorca. The winner of that tournament had the possibility through all kinds of matches to challenge the world champion in the end. I ceded my place to him because I thought he had a better chance. That turned out to be correct. He won in Mallorca and after that beat Taimanov, Larsen and Petrosian and finally had the right to play against Spassky.[\[vii\]](#)

Fischer still almost did not make it to Reykjavik, Iceland to challenge Soviet Chess Grandmaster Boris Spassky for the World Chess Championship. A call from U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and additional prize money from millionaire businessman James Slater were factors that finally persuaded Fischer to make the trip.[\[viii\]](#)

Even with Fischer in Iceland the championship almost did not take place. Fischer forfeited the second game and continued to make incessant demands of tournament officials. The joke making the rounds in Reykjavik was that Fischer had demanded the setting of the sun three hours earlier. Fortunately, Boris Spassky was a gentleman and true sportsman throughout the match. Spassky capitulated to most of Fischer's demands and allowed the match to continue.[\[ix\]](#)

American Chess Grandmaster Isaac Kashdan stated: "In a contest for the nicest guy in chess, Bobby Fischer would finish out of the money. But he is definitely the best chess player in the world." Fischer won the World Chess Championship by a 12 ½ to 8 ½ margin over Spassky.[\[x\]](#) Spassky and Fischer became lifelong friends after their match.[\[xi\]](#)

Fischer returned to New York City two weeks after his win to a hero's welcome. Mayor John Lindsay saluted Fischer as "the grandest master of them all" and Fischer was offered the key to the city. The celebrations found Fischer in a relaxed state of mind. Fischer was eager to sign autographs and even made a joke during his speech. There was a widespread consensus that Fischer would soon enter the multi-millionaires' club. The future of world championship chess seemed assured.[\[xii\]](#)

Retirement

Attractive financial offers were made to Bobby Fischer after he won the World Chess Championship. However, except for a relatively modest offer to be the guest of honor at the First Philippine International Chess Tournament in 1973, Fischer turned them all down.[\[xiii\]](#) Fischer also refused to play competitive chess for the next 20 years.

So what did Fischer do with his free time? Fischer biographer Frank Brady writes:

Many people who haven't been formally educated awaken later in life with a desire to progress and deepen their view of the world, to go back to school or self-educate themselves. Bobby joined their ranks out of an essential self-awareness...

Bobby's lack of traditional institutional education was well known and continually reported in the press, but what wasn't common knowledge was that after he won the World Championship at age 29, he began a systemized regimen of study outside chess. History, government, religion, politics, and current

events became his great interests, and during the 33-year interval from his first Reykjavik stay to his second he spent most of his spare time reading and amassing knowledge. [\[xiv\]](#)

Fischer began to develop politically incorrect ideas from his readings. Fischer read *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and many other conspiracy books. He also became convinced that the so-called Holocaust was a major fraud. Fischer's Jewish mother Regina wrote him stating that Nazi Germany had murdered children like vermin in homicidal gas chambers. Fischer, however, remained an outspoken critic of the Holocaust story. [\[xv\]](#)

Fischer would even tell first-time acquaintances that the Holocaust was a hoax. For example, Dutch Chess Grandmaster Jan Timman writes about his only meeting with Bobby Fischer in 1990 in Brussels: "It was inevitable that the conversation would touch on the Holocaust. 'It is a hoax,' he said very softly, almost mumbling." [\[xvi\]](#)

Fischer had been embraced as the prodigal son by the Worldwide Church of God after winning the World Chess Championship. However, Fischer left the church, stating in 1977: "They cleaned out my pockets. Now my only income is a few royalty checks from my books. I was really very foolish." [\[xvii\]](#)

Fischer eventually found a way to make money by agreeing to a rematch with Boris Spassky in 1992.

Fischer Returns to Chess

The Fischer rematch with Spassky took place in war-ravaged Yugoslavia. Fischer received a letter from the U.S. Department of the Treasury 10 days before the match began stating that as a U.S. citizen he would be prohibited from playing the match under Executive Order 12810. Violations of this Executive Order would be punishable by civil and criminal penalties and up to 10 years in prison. [\[xviii\]](#)

Fischer despised the U.S. government and disregarded the Treasury Department's letter. In a press conference held the night before the match, Fischer was asked: "Are you worried by U.S. government threats over your defiance of the sanctions?" Fischer responded:

One second here. [He then removed a letter from his briefcase and held it up.] This is the order to provide information of illegal activities, from the Department of the Treasury in Washington, D.C., August 21, 1992. So this is my reply to their order not to defend my title here. [He then spat on the letter, and applause broke out.] That is my answer. [\[xix\]](#)

Fischer continued to make controversial statements during the press conference. When asked about Communism, he said, "Soviet Communism is basically a mask for Bolshevism which is a mask for Judaism." Denying that he was an anti-Semite, Fischer responded that Arabs were Semites too, "And I am definitely not anti-Arab." [\[xx\]](#)

The chess match was somewhat anticlimactic, with Fischer beating Spassky and collecting the winner's prize of \$3.5 million. After receiving the money due him, Fischer's sister took most of the money and opened an account in Fischer's name at the Union Bank of Switzerland. On December 15, 1992, an indictment was issued against Bobby Fischer in federal court by a grand jury for violating Executive Order 12810. U.S. federal officials issued a warrant for his arrest. [\[xxi\]](#)

Exile

Fischer spent most of the next eight years in Hungary. He was the frequent guest of Laszlo Polgar and his three outstanding chess-playing daughters, Zsuzsa, Zsofia and Judit Polgar. While the Polgars all enjoyed playing and analyzing chess with Fischer, they eventually grew tired of his Holocaust revisionism and strong statements against the United States government. After a few years they went their separate ways. [\[xxii\]](#)

Fischer was also the frequent guest in Budapest of Chess Grandmaster Andrei Lilienthal and his wife Olga. Listening to Lilienthal was like reading a book of chess history, and Fischer greatly enjoyed being with these genial hosts. However, after a few years a couple of unfortunate incidents ruined their friendship. [\[xxiii\]](#)

The loss of friends never prevented Fischer from expressing his views. Fischer once refused to allow a Jewish chess player to enter his car until the man was willing to proclaim that the Holocaust was fraudulent. On January 13, 1999, during a live radio broadcast in Budapest, Fischer declared, "As Adolf Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*, the Jews are not the victims, they are the victimizers!" [\[xxiv\]](#)

Fischer eventually felt safe enough to travel to many countries. While living in Tokyo he was called by Radio Baguio in the Philippines shortly after the 9/11 attacks in the United States. Fischer later said about this 9/11 interview: "I was tricked." Fischer was not in a stable condition when the Filipino radio station phoned him, and they knew what to expect from him. [\[xxv\]](#)

In a profanity-laced tirade, Fischer said among other things that the World Trade Center attacks were wonderful news and he wanted the United States to be wiped out. [\[xxvi\]](#) Although aired over a small station in Baguio City, his interview went viral over the Internet. Numerous letters were sent to the White House and the Justice Department demanding Fischer's arrest; many of these letters stated that Fischer's arrest was long overdue. [\[xxvii\]](#)

Final Years

Bobby Fischer was arrested on July 13, 2004, when he went to an airport in Tokyo to board a plane bound for Manila. He was shackled and sent to a local jail. Several people formed a committee called "Free Bobby Fischer" and worked with others attempting to free Fischer from prison. Fischer and his supporters began contacting numerous countries to determine if they would offer him asylum. Iceland was the only country that expressed an interest. The Icelanders not only had the ability to offer Fischer asylum, but also to secure it and extricate him from prison. [\[xxviii\]](#)

The process to free Fischer advanced slowly. Boris Spassky sent the following telegram to an Icelandic official near the end of 2004:

Now when the whole chess world is cowardly silent, Icelandic people made a natural and brave move to help Bobby. Congratulations. And my applause! If you need my assistance or help, please let me know. I will join with great pleasure the group of brave Icelandic people. I take the opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. [\[xxix\]](#)

Bobby Fischer was granted Icelandic citizenship on March 21, 2005, by a special measure of the Icelandic parliament. No one in the Icelandic parliament opposed the measure. [\[xxx\]](#) On March 23, 2005, Fischer was released from jail, given his Icelandic passport, and flew to Iceland. Fischer was now in a country that truly wanted him, and for the first time in 13 years he felt safe. [\[xxxi\]](#)

Fischer lived out his final years in Iceland. He spent most of his time reading, and eventually became bored living on the small island. Fischer died from kidney failure on January 17, 2008. [\[xxxii\]](#)

Conclusion

Russian Chess Grandmaster Garry Kasparov pays tribute to Bobby Fischer:

There are few names in the history of sport that have transcended the earthly title of world champion and become legend. Fewer still have achieved this while active, or while still living for that matter. Bobby Fischer was a member of this select group. He possessed an aura beyond chess and personality, beyond even his status as a symbol of Cold War confrontation...

Today we have books and databases full of his games, but the best annotations cannot transmit the pressure his opponents must have felt at the board. Over and over in Fischer's games you see the strongest players in the world crack, often making mistakes you wouldn't believe them capable of making—against anyone but Fischer...Despite his short reign, he dominated his era to such a degree that it will always bear his name...

Fischer's legacy extends well beyond the 64 squares. Throughout his career he was, in the excellent phrase of Spassky's, "the honorary chairman of our trade union." He believed our game and its players deserved far better treatment than it received, and he got results. His demands, often criticized as outrageous at the time, led to better conditions and prizes for all. [\[xxxiii\]](#)

Bobby Fischer was widely criticized for his controversial statements outside of chess. For example, Dick and Jeremy Schaap questioned Fischer's sanity, while Charles Krauthammer wrote that "he's clearly a sick man." [\[xxxiv\]](#) However, it would be more accurate to state that Fischer used his prodigious intellect to read widely and deeply to discover many of the lies that pervade our society. His exposure of the Holocaust hoax is especially praiseworthy. Bobby Fischer was truly an authentic American hero.

Endnotes

[\[i\]](#) Böhm, Hans and Jongkind, Kees, *Bobby Fischer: The Wandering King*, London: B T Batsford, 2004, p. 25.

[\[ii\]](#) Brady, Frank, *Endgame: Bobby Fischer's Rise and Fall—from America's Brightest Prodigy to the Edge of Madness*, New York: Crown Publishers, 2011, pp. 18, 20-21.

[\[iii\]](#) *Ibid.*, p. 23.

[\[iv\]](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 39, 42, 50-52, 55.

[\[v\]](#) *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[\[vi\]](#) Edmonds, David and Eidinow, John, *Bobby Fischer Goes to War*, London: Faber and Faber Limited, 2004, pp. 13-14.

[\[vii\]](#) Böhm, Hans *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

[\[viii\]](#) Edmonds, David *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-132.

[ix] *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159, 170-171.

[x] *Ibid.*, pp. 205, 215.

[xi] Olafsson, Helgi, *Bobby Fischer Comes Home*, The Netherlands: New in Chess, 2012, pp. 75-76.

[xii] Edmonds, David *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 259-260.

[xiii] Brady, Frank, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-209.

[xiv] *Ibid.*, p. 297.

[xv] *Ibid.*, pp. 212-215.

[xvi] Euwe, Max and Timman, Jan, *Fischer World Champion!*, 3rd edition, Alkmaar, The Netherlands: New in Chess, 2009, p. 19.

[xvii] Böhm, Hans and Jongkind, Kees, *Bobby Fischer: The Wandering King*, London: B T Batsford, 2004, p. 54.

[xviii] Brady, Frank *op. cit.*, pp. 242-244.

[xix] *Ibid.*, pp. 247-248.

[xx] *Ibid.*, p. 249.

[xxi] *Ibid.*, pp. 253, 255.

[xxii] *Ibid.*, pp. 260-262, 265, 269.

[xxiii] *Ibid.*, pp. 262-265.

[xxiv] *Ibid.*, pp. 266, 271.

[xxv] Olafsson, Helgi, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

[xxvi] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BkLE90jSCWU>.

[xxvii] Brady, Frank, *op. cit.*, pp. 279-280.

[xxviii] *Ibid.*, pp. 282-286.

[xxix] Olafsson, Helgi, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

[xxx] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[xxxi] Brady, Frank, *op. cit.*, pp. 293-294.

[xxxii] Olafsson, Helgi, *op. cit.*, pp. 109, 117.

[xxxiii] Euwe, Max *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 10.

[xxxiv] Olafsson, Helgi, *op. cit.*, pp. 65, 130.

Author(s):	John Wear
Title:	Bobby Fischer, Grand Master of Revisionism
Sources:	<i>Inconvenient History</i> , Vol. 11, No. 1 (2019)
Dates:	published: 2019-04-10, first posted: 2019-04-11 02:30:56

<http://inconvenienthistory.com/11/1/6653>